THE PAINTED PIG

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and

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A MEXICAN PICTURE BOOK

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To

CONSTANCE

who helped me buy a painted pig

in the market at *Cuernavaca*

THE PAINTED PIG

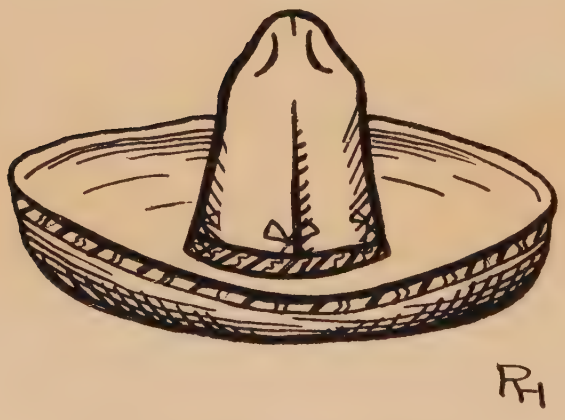
HE WAS painted yellow, with pink roses on his back and a tiny rose-bud on his tail. He looked fat, but he was fed nothing at all. In his side was a small slit where you were supposed to put pennies, but his little mistress never had a centavo to drop into the hole; so his savings-bank stomach remained permanently empty.

His mistress was a little Indian girl who lived in Mexico between the smoking mountains and the cactus with red flowers. Her full name was Guadalupe Faustina Jovita Chimalpopoca, but everybody called her Pita, which is much shorter, prettier, and just as good. She was only ten years old but she wore a long blue scarf and a long skirt like her mother and also big gold ear-rings and a gold necklace. Her hair was parted in the middle, and the two braids at the back were tied together with a brown shoe-string.

Pita's brother was eight years old. His name was Felipe Camerino Victoriano Tlaxochimaco. If you say that correctly, it makes your whole tongue and

all your teeth work. Like Pita he had another name not so long and wide. Most people called him Pedro. He wore brown sandals, no stockings, a red shirt, and long, white trousers. His coat was a blue and white blanket with a hole in the middle where he stuck his head. His hat was big as an umbrella, so he always had to put it on after the blanket; it would never have squeezed through the hole. It was made of bright yellow straw, and the brim had pictures on it worked in green and white wool.

Pedro always liked his sister's playthings better than his own. He had a toy general, made of glass, riding on a rooster. It was the third general his mother had given him, but glass generals are brittle and go to pieces easily. After the soldier was broken, Pedro never cared for the little rooster left



This is Pita

crowing without him. He had a yellow jumping-jack besides and two dogs, but they looked like reindeer and their heads were a little twisted. Pedro used to beg Pita to let him play with her painted pig.

" But you will break him," she said.

" Oh, no! I promise to be very careful."

" But you broke your general," his sister reminded him.

" Yes, but he wasn't strong."

" My pig isn't strong."

This is Pedro

" Yes, he is," cried Pedro. " A pig is always strong. And I like the rosebud on his tail. My dogs have such plain tails! "

" I'm afraid you will rub the roses off with your dirty fingers," Pita objected.

" My fingers aren't dirty."

" Why don't you play with your wiggly man? "

" I don't want my wiggly man. I want your pig."

Then after Pedro had begged and begged like this, Pita would run away from him and pretend not to see him or hear him wail. She would tease him by singing:

" I ride on my pig,
I gallop and jig,
I jounce and I bounce,
I prance and I dance,
I leap and I creep,
I jump and I stump! "

One day when they were tired of quarrelling Pita thought of going to Pancho, the toy-maker, and asking him to make Pedro a pig of his very own, with

"I ride on my pig"

roses on his back and a rosebud on his tail. Before they started out, she explained carefully to her own pig what they were doing and where they were going. He listened with his best savings-bank manner, which means that he did not talk himself at all. Pita made a great many gestures with her little brown hands and talked very loud, as you have to do when the other person does not say anything.

Pancho the toy-maker lived outside the city. He came to town with his pack of toys on his back about once a month. If you met him on the road and tried to buy a toy from him, he would never sell even the smallest ball or balloon. It did not matter how many pesos you offered him — he would not open his load until he reached the market.

Pita explained where they were going

He liked seeing all the other pedlars in the square and eating *tortillas* under his big umbrella when there were no customers. The man on one side of him sold fruit. He had little piles of oranges, prickly pears, and mangoes in front of him on the pavement, and a heap of about sixteen peanuts. On his head he balanced a brown tray filled with slices of pink watermelon.

Here are Pancho and the fruit-man

The man on the other side was a basket-maker. It was good business to sit near him, Pancho thought, for people would buy more toys when they had a basket to carry them home in.

When Pita and Pedro came along and asked for a toy pig painted yellow and decorated with roses, Pancho said solemnly, looking at his rows of horses, donkeys, deer, cows, and rabbits: " I'm sure you don't want a pig; nobody buys pigs any more. What you really want is a donkey. I have a beautiful burro from Puebla with a load of yellow marigolds on his back."

" No," said Pedro, " I want a pig like Pita's here."

" Please look at this rabbit," Pancho went on politely. " It is made of straw, and its ears wiggle. And I have beautiful straw horses; their tails wave naturally. A horse like this won't break like a clay pig."

" It is a pretty horse," said Pita, " but — "

" Perhaps you would like a lion," Pancho broke in. " It is very fierce; and see what large black eyes it has. Usually lions have yellow ones."

" But you don't understand," Pita said impatiently. " Pedro wants a pig just like mine. Haven't you one? "

" No," said Pancho, " I haven't had a pig like that since Christmas."

" Could you make one? " asked Pita.

These are the straw horses

" Yes — yes — I could make anything," said the man, " but I'm sorry. you don't want the lion."

" Can you make it just like Pita's? " Pedro asked.

" Well, yes, I could," Pancho answered slowly. " But it would be very stupid to make two pigs exactly the same; don't you think so? How would you like a black pig with a wreath of red roses around his neck? "

" I think yellow is prettier," said Pedro. " Please make him yellow."

" All right," said the toy-maker; " he will cost five centavos " — and the children ran home.

But when they came to market the next week, Pancho had nothing for them. He said: " My grandmother has been sick. I could not work. She cried all day long because her teeth hurt, and we had to tie her head in a bag, but still the neighbours heard her."

" How could she eat with her head in a bag? " asked Pita anxiously. " Did you cut a hole for her mouth? "

" No," the toy-maker answered solemnly. " Air would get in, and that is the worst thing for sick people."

" I've been sick too," Pedro burst out proudly. " Once I had the fever, but I didn't cry — did I, Pita? "

" Not much," his sister answered, " except when Mother gave you the tea."

" It was nasty! " Pedro cried. " They put in mint — "

" And cabbage — "

" And rose-leaves — "

" And charcoal — "

" And ginger-root — "

" And butter."

" I must tell my grandmother," said Pancho. " We never have butter,

but we could use lard."

The next week Pancho came empty-handed again.

" I lost my paint-brush," he explained to the children. " Perhaps the cat ate it. I looked everywhere and I tried to use a turkey-feather, but it broke."

The Saturday after that he said: " The clay didn't want to work. I'll have to wait for the full moon " — and the next week he had forgotten all about the pig.

" Are you sure you said a pig? " he asked. " I have a beautiful blue bird here that an old woman in the next village made. She took a gourd and dried it and rubbed it for two whole days to polish the back. Feel how smooth it is."

" I don't want to feel it," said Pedro sulkily.

" See what a long red beak it has," Pancho went on. " That's a thorn — I almost pricked my fingers, it is so sharp."

" I don't like birds," cried Pedro and he and Pita went away much disappointed.

They tried again in two weeks but the toy-maker had only jumping-jacks to show. His little booth was hung with them and they wiggled and danced in the wind.

This is the blue bird

" How about a fine black turkey? " he asked the children — " with eight big tail-feathers all — "

" I hate turkeys," Pedro cried.

" Or a blue fish with yellow — "

" I hate fish! "

" Or a ship — no extra charge for sails — "

" I hate ships — "

" Or a clown in striped trousers — "

" I ha — "

" With pig's bristles for whiskers — "

" — hate him the most of all! " cried Pedro.

" I think he looks a little like a pig really," gaily urged the toy-maker. " Won't he do? "

Pita and the jumping-jacks

But of course he would not, though the gold buttons on his tight trousers shone beautifully in the sun.

The next time Pancho had dishes and pots for sale, and after that windmills and balloons. The same thing happened over and over again until the children were tired of going to the market.

" I never want to see that old Pancho again! " cried Pedro, completely discouraged, as they walked home after the last attempt. He had bought a balloon, but he was too disappointed to play with it and sat down in the garden, ready to cry. Pita hid herself under the cactus bush and hoped that the mason mending the wall would not hear the sobs. Pedro was too big a boy to cry.

Suddenly to her surprise he ran towards her with a shout of delight. His hands were full of clay and he waved a trowel the gardener had given him.

" Pita! " he screamed, " I'm going to make my own pig! Pancho needn't think he is the only one who can do it. You sit right here, and in five minutes I'll show you something lovely."

" Are you going to make him like mine? " asked Pita.

" Bigger than yours! " he answered excitedly. " And perhaps I'll make him a policeman pig — or with a ranchero's hat — or riding a donkey."

This is the clown in striped trousers

He retired to a corner, shouting gaily once or twice: " I'm Pancho! I'm Pancho the toy-maker! " But that soon stopped and there was quiet in the patio for a long time. Pita sat loyally under the cactus waiting a summons to see the finished product. It seemed at least an hour to her before Pedro put his head round the bush and said rather slowly: " I'm not going to make a policeman, Pita; the coat looks funny, and it hides the tail."

There was quiet half an hour more, and then Pedro came out again to explain. " I don't like a ranchero hat on the pig — it hides his ears. I think I'll make just a plain pig."

" Yes, do," his sister answered. " Dressed-up animals look like dolls anyway."

Again there was quiet. Pita could hear the water running in the fountain and knew that Pedro must be wetting the clay. A little later he was slapping it between his hands and she heard him say: " Now you be good." Then he whistled a little, but finally that stopped. It was very stupid for Pita waiting like this with nothing to do. She counted the leaves on the bush above her head — and then the thorns on each leaf. She tried to pick a red blossom, but she pricked her thumb. She counted twenty-five slowly — fifty — one hundred — but still no word came from Pedro. Finally she got up on her

Pita sat loyally under the cactus

chair and looked over the wall. Pedro had his head in his hands. He was thinking very hard. A little bird was on his shoulder and the dogs were begging for a run, but he paid no attention.

" What are you doing? " Pita cried. " Isn't the clay good? "

Her brother uncovered his eyes and said dreamily: " I'm just trying to remember how long a pig's nose is. It's funny how I have forgotten."

" Pigs don't have noses! " Pita cried. " They have snouts, and they are quite long." Then she ran off to fetch her own pig as an example, but Pedro would not let her come near the fountain, where he had a strange pile of sand, sticks, and mud.

He worked all the afternoon, grunting like a little pig himself as he slapped and pounded the clay, added sand and water, and spread it out on a board. To all Pita's questions he answered impatiently: " Just wait — just wait a minute." She begged to help, and Pedro promised that when he came to painting the back, she might put on a stroke of yellow. It was six o'clock and the sun was reddening the white volcanoes when he finally called to her that he was done. She came round the cactus bush and looked at Pedro's pig.

" Oh, Pedro! " she cried. " Is that — is that *it?*"

Pedro was thinking very hard

" Yes," he answered slowly. " I made seven others, but this was the only one where the tail stuck."

" Isn't it rather thick? " asked Pita.

" But it won't stay on unless you make it thick," her brother answered. " And I wanted to have a curl in the tail. Don't you see the curl? "

" Yes," she said. " Aren't the ears awfully big? "

" Perhaps — but don't pigs always have big ears? "

" No — no, — Pedro — it's elephants you're thinking of."

" And his snout, Pita — it was hard to get that pointed. Do you think that's all right? "

" Well — yes — for a very big pig — a mother pig," she answered slowly. " It's awfully long."

" You said snouts were always long! "

" But not *so* long."

" And his legs," Pedro continued anxiously — " I tried and tried, but I couldn't get them all alike."

" They do wobble a little," she murmured.

" Isn't *any* of him right? " asked the little artist.

Pita looked at Pedro's pig

" Oh, yes," Pita hurried to assure him. " He has a good back. I think anybody would know you meant the smooth part for his back."

" Really? " asked her brother, encouraged. " And if I could just make over the tail and the legs — but I'm so tired! And the clay won't work. I should have waited for the full moon. You can't make a good pig without the moon, Pancho said."

" Yes, Pedro, that must be it," his sister assented eagerly. " It's not your fault this isn't a — a — well, very piggy pig. Make another when the moon is full."

" But what shall I do with this one? " asked Pedro sadly, looking down at his handiwork.

" Let's bury him," said Pita, and they dug a hole with the trowel and laid him under the cactus. The grass soon grew over his grave, and everybody forgot him.

In the bright spring months that followed, the talk was all of kites, and Pedro and Pita had a troop of them flying over the garden. One morning they were running down the plaza to buy twine to float an unusually large red dragon when Pancho came out of his booth, smiling, with a savings-bank pig in his hand.

" I made him last night," Pancho said. " He's a grand pig, fat and strong, and he only costs five centavos."

He was painted yellow, with blue circles on his back and a large blue dot behind each ear.

" It would have been stupid to make two pigs alike," Pancho went on. " And blue looks very well on a yellow pig."

" He is wonderful! " cried Pedro, snatching him from Pancho's hand to run practised fingers over the head. " The ears aren't too big, and the nose isn't too long, and the legs don't wobble."

" They could walk to Vera Cruz," the toy-maker put in proudly.

" And he's yellow like your pig, Pita," Pedro finished. " And blue rings are just as pretty as pink roses, aren't they? "

" Almost," answered Pita, with her hand on the rosebud tail.

Then Pita picked up her skirt, and Pedro flung his blanket over his shoulder, and together they danced for joy with Pancho and the two pigs looking on.

Pita and Pedro danced for joy

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